

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY**

AKBAR NAIM, :  
Plaintiff, : Civil Action No. 09-1128 (PGS)  
: :  
: v. : OPINION  
: :  
GEORGE W. HAYMAN, et al., :  
Defendants. : :

**APPEARANCES:**

AKBAR NAIM, Plaintiff pro se  
#90463A  
East Jersey State Prison  
Lock Bag R  
Rahway, New Jersey 07065

**SHERIDAN**, District Judge

Plaintiff Akbar Naim, a state prisoner currently incarcerated at the East Jersey State Prison in Rahway, New Jersey, seeks to bring this action in forma pauperis. Based on his affidavit of indigence and the absence of three qualifying dismissals within 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g), the Court will grant plaintiff's application to proceed in forma pauperis ("IFP") pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a) (1998) and order the Clerk of the Court to file the Complaint.

At this time, the Court must review the Complaint, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A, to determine whether it should be dismissed as frivolous or malicious, for failure to

state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or because it seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. For the reasons set forth below, the Court concludes that the Complaint should be dismissed in its entirety.

I. BACKGROUND

Plaintiff, Akbar Naim ("Naim"), brings this civil action against the following defendants: George W. Hayman; Michelle Ricci; and Transport Officers #1 and #2 (John Does). (Complaint, Caption, ¶¶ 4b, 4c and 4d). The following factual allegations are taken from the Complaint, and are accepted for purposes of this screening only. The Court has made no findings as to the veracity of plaintiff's allegations.

Naim alleges that, on March 16, 2007, upon returning from a court trip in a New Jersey Department of Corrections ("NJDOC") vehicle, escorted by two John Doe correctional (or transport) officers, Naim slipped and fell while disembarking because he was handcuffed and shackled. Naim alleges that the officers neglected to assist him while he was disembarking. Naim fell backwards on his buttocks and left elbow. He does not allege that he required hospital or other medical attention for his injury.

Naim seeks an unspecified amount in punitive and compensatory damages.

## II. STANDARDS FOR A SUA SPONTE DISMISSAL

The Prison Litigation Reform Act ("PLRA"), Pub. L. No. 104-134, §§ 801-810, 110 Stat. 1321-66 to 1321-77 (April 26, 1996), requires a district court to review a complaint in a civil action in which a prisoner is proceeding in forma pauperis or seeks redress against a governmental employee or entity. The Court is required to identify cognizable claims and to sua sponte dismiss any claim that is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B) and 1915A. This action is subject to sua sponte screening for dismissal under both 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B) and 1915A.

In determining the sufficiency of a pro se complaint, the Court must be mindful to construe it liberally in favor of the plaintiff. See Erickson v. Pardus, \_\_ U.S. \_\_, 127 S.Ct. 2197, 2200 (2007)(following Estelle v. Gamble, 429 U.S. 97, 106 (1976) and Haines v. Kerner, 404 U.S. 519, 520-21 (1972)). See also United States v. Day, 969 F.2d 39, 42 (3d Cir. 1992). The Court must "accept as true all of the allegations in the complaint and all reasonable inferences that can be drawn therefrom, and view them in the light most favorable to the plaintiff." Morse v. Lower Merion School Dist., 132 F.3d 902, 906 (3d Cir. 1997). The

Court need not, however, credit a pro se plaintiff's "bald assertions" or "legal conclusions." Id.

A complaint is frivolous if it "lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact." Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989) (interpreting the predecessor of § 1915(e)(2), the former § 1915(d)). The standard for evaluating whether a complaint is "frivolous" is an objective one. Deutsch v. United States, 67 F.3d 1080, 1086-87 (3d Cir. 1995).

A pro se complaint may be dismissed for failure to state a claim only if it appears "'beyond doubt that the plaintiff can prove no set of facts in support of his claim which would entitle him to relief.'" Haines, 404 U.S. at 521 (quoting Conley v. Gibson, 355 U.S. 41, 45-46 (1957)); Milhouse v. Carlson, 652 F.2d 371, 373 (3d Cir. 1981). See also Erickson, 127 S.Ct. at 2200 (In a pro se prisoner civil rights complaint, the Court reviewed whether the complaint complied with the pleading requirements of Rule 8(a)(2). "Specific facts are not necessary; the statement need only "'give the defendant fair notice of what the ... claim is and the grounds upon which it rests.'" Bell v. Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. \_\_\_, \_\_\_ (2007) (slip op., at 7-8) (quoting Conley v. Gibson, 355 U.S. 41, 47 (1957)). However, where a complaint can be remedied by an amendment, a district court may not dismiss the complaint with prejudice, but must permit the amendment. Denton v. Hernandez, 504 U.S. 25, 34 (1992); Alston

v. Parker, 363 F.3d 229 (3d Cir. 2004) (complaint that satisfied notice pleading requirement that it contain short, plain statement of the claim but lacked sufficient detail to function as a guide to discovery was not required to be dismissed for failure to state a claim; district court should permit a curative amendment before dismissing a complaint, unless an amendment would be futile or inequitable); Grayson v. Mayview State Hospital, 293 F.3d 103, 108 (3d Cir. 2002) (dismissal pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)); Shane v. Fauver, 213 F.3d 113, 116-17 (3d Cir. 2000) (dismissal pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(c)(1)); Urrutia v. Harrisburg County Police Dept., 91 F.3d 451, 453 (3d Cir. 1996).

### III. SECTION 1983 ACTIONS

Plaintiff brings this action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 alleging violations of his civil rights guaranteed under the United States Constitution. Section 1983 provides in relevant part:

Every person who, under color of any statute, ordinance, regulation, custom, or usage, of any State or Territory ... subjects, or causes to be subjected, any citizen of the United States or other person within the jurisdiction thereof to the deprivation of any rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the Constitution and laws, shall be liable to the party injured in an action at law, suit in equity, or other proper proceeding for redress ... .

Thus, to state a claim for relief under § 1983, a plaintiff must allege, first, the violation of a right secured by the

Constitution or laws of the United States and, second, that the alleged deprivation was committed or caused by a person acting under color of state law. West v. Atkins, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988); Piecknick v. Pennsylvania, 36 F.3d 1250, 1255-56 (3d Cir. 1994).

#### IV. ANALYSIS

In his Complaint, Naim essentially contends that defendants were negligent in supervising his safety during transport. Namely, the officers failed to assist plaintiff in disembarking from the van while he was handcuffed and shackled. This claim alleges simple negligence, not deliberate indifference necessary to establish an Eighth Amendment violation under § 1983.

Indeed, where defendants merely have failed to exercise due care in failing to prevent harm to an inmate, such negligence is insufficient to establish a violation of the Eighth Amendment.

See Davidson v. Cannon, 474 U.S. 344, 345-48 (1986); Schwartz v. County of Montgomery, 843 F.Supp. 962 (E.D. Pa.), aff'd, 37 F.3d 1488 (3d Cir. 1994) (mere negligence insufficient to support a § 1983 action for violation of the Eighth or Fourteenth Amendments).

Moreover, this Court finds that no diversity jurisdiction exists in this matter if plaintiff's claim was construed as simple negligence under state law. Naim can bring such common law claims in federal district court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1332(a), if the matter in controversy exceeds the sum or value of

\$75,000, and is between citizens of different states. It has long been recognized that, to found jurisdiction upon § 1332, there must be complete diversity among all parties, *i.e.*, each plaintiff must be a citizen of a different state from each defendant. Owen Equipment and Erection Co. V. Kroger, 437 U.S. 365 (1978). In particular, if a sole plaintiff and any one of several defendants are citizens of the same state, complete diversity is lacking and the action would have to be dismissed for lack of jurisdiction. Id.

Here, there does not appear to be diversity of jurisdiction between the plaintiff and the defendant officials. Plaintiff is currently confined in New Jersey, and the defendants are employed by the NJDOC and work in New Jersey where the incident occurred.<sup>1</sup> These facts suggest that the defendants likely reside in the State of New Jersey. Therefore, because complete diversity appears to be lacking, the Court has no subject matter jurisdiction over any state law claim that may be construed from the Complaint against this defendant, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1332(a). Plaintiff may seek to reopen this case if he can show facts to support diversity jurisdiction.

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<sup>1</sup> Plaintiff does not provide the domicile or residence of the defendants, except to note that they are employed by the NJDOC and work in New Jersey.

V. CONCLUSION

Therefore, for the reasons set forth above, the Complaint will be dismissed in its entirety, as against all defendants, for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) and 1915A(b)(1). An appropriate order follows.

*s/Peter G. Sheridan*  
PETER G. SHERIDAN, U.S.D.J.

September 22, 2009